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INFO: GEORGETOWN, LONDON, PARAMARIBO

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ANALYSIS & DISTRIBUTION  
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FROM : Amembassy THE HAGUE

DATE: December 28, 1965

SUBJECT: Boundary Dispute between British Guiana and Surinam

REF : Georgetown's A-108 of December 9, 1965

Following are comments of the Director of Western Hemisphere Affairs in the Foreign Ministry (MFA) on the subject boundary dispute which reflect the current views of the Netherlands Government on this question. The MFA official confirmed that the boundary dispute is a matter which had been held in abeyance between the London and Hague Governments but which should be settled prior to, or in connection with, the independence of British Guiana. The official did not foresee, however, a quick or easy settlement of the matter.

## History of the Dispute

According to the official, the dispute arose from conflicting ideas regarding the source of the Corentyne River which had been accepted after the earliest explorations as the boundary between British and Dutch Guiana. An eighteenth century expedition reported that the river, presently known as the New River, was the source of the Corentyne and was accepted as the boundary between the two areas. When a later survey in the nineteenth century disproved the earlier finding, the Dutch claimed that tradition and custom had already accepted the boundary established by the first survey and continued to recognize that boundary.

*Either Dutch official  
hazy, or state fellow*

*BACKWARD*

FORM  
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12/28/65

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Clearances:

ARMATT:JLSullivan (draft)

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Likelihood of Settlement

The MFA official, a long-time resident of Surinam who is regarded in the Ministry as an expert on that part of the Realm, said that efforts should be made to settle the dispute before independence is granted to British Guiana. He felt that the dispute, although relatively insignificant in Netherlands-UK relations, would be serious enough to Surinam and Guyana to cause the new nation unnecessary difficulties. In his opinion, resolution of the off-shore boundary would not be difficult; however, the upland frontier, even though uninhabited jungle, would be a difficult question to settle because of the possibility of Surinam's losing a territory which has been considered Dutch for generations and because of the possibility of still-undiscovered mineral wealth or other natural resources in the area.

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